Two aspects of Romanian in a cross-linguistic perspective

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The two aspects in the title of the talk refer to 1. Romanian negative imperatives in a Romance perspective and 2. An analysis of the structure type man-nature relationship based on Romanian data.

The first part of the presentation discusses the expression of the negative imperative in Romanian and in two dialects of Romanian, in the context of other Romance languages and dialects, especially the group of idioms in Italy. We first identify four types of relationships between positive and negative imperatives. These relationships offer the measure of the variation in the construction of the negative imperative across Romance idioms. It is shown that this variation may be reduced to a simpler description. Further, we review several approaches to this diversity. We discuss the proposals of Rivero (1994), Zanuttini (1997) and Han (2001) and show that some of their drawbacks seem to come from ignoring the semantic side of negative imperatives, which is the scope relationship between negation and the illocutionary force of the imperative. Consequently, we explore the chances of a purely semantic approach to the realization of negative imperatives. To this purpose we propose a test for determining the relationship between negation and directive (i.e. the standard illocutionary force of an imperative). This test is applied to the case of Romanian but it seems general enough to be also applied to the other situations in Romania.

The second part of the talk approaches the Romanian tri-nominal juxtaposition structure relație om – natură ‘man-nature relationship’. This structure is cross-linguistically widespread and typical for a series of relational nouns, such as agreement, interaction, mixture, etc., which can have a “compound” expansion (Canada-U.S. agreement, parent-child interaction, air-water mixture, etc.). Our analysis is two-fold. We will firstly examine the grammatical relationship between relație ‘relationship’ and om – natură ‘man-nature’, and, secondly, the construction om – natură. On the basis of data from a large Romanian newspaper corpus, we show that such a “compound” construction is in fact a free phrase we call Relational Coordination Construction (RCC). It embodies valency complements of a relational noun and it semantically implies reciprocity.

References